

Annex 3

Following the decision taken on December 12, 2001 by the Conference of Presidents, the **European Parliament** (EP) approved in mid-January 2002 the establishment of a Temporary Foot and Mouth Committee (TFMC). The TFMC will be in existence for 12 months, at the end of which, it will report to the EP. The TFMC will be instructed to, amongst other things, assess the EU's policy and controls of meat imports from third countries in the context of FMD.

UK inquiries:

Two independent inquiries into the FMD outbreak which will report to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for DEFRA were announced by the Government on August 9, 2001:

One of them, the Scientific review by the Royal Society, will be reviewing scientific questions relating to the transmission, prevention and control of epidemic outbreaks of infectious diseases in livestock in Great Britain and will make recommendations by summer 2002. This inquiry should take close account of related inquiries, notably the administrative inquiry into the handling of the 2001 FMD outbreak and the policy commission on the future of agriculture.

On the question of transmission/prevention, they will address identifying present and future risks of disease, what we know about risks to Great-Britain posed by animal disease world-wide; whether we know enough; and whether early warning/horizon scanning arrangements are scientifically and logistically adequate.

In the UK and Holland, industry is calling for tighter border controls (similar to the Canadian border) but officials don't seem to anticipate the introduction of restrictions and cited concerns about cost and practicality. The National Farmers' Union estimates that 10 tonnes of illegal meat enters Heathrow airport in passengers' baggage. Some of this meat comes from high risk sources (e.g. bush meat from Africa).

Report on Government/Industry Mission on Foot and Mouth Disease, UK and the Netherlands, 14-18 January 2002, Dr Sarah Kahn Jan. 21, 2002.

Excerpt from the **NFU report** "The National Farmers' Union is the democratic organisation representing farmers and growers in England and Wales."

...it seems highly probable that the virus entered the UK from another country, probably via an illegally imported contaminated food product. The NFU has for a long time been concerned about the threats to the UK's animal and plant - and, ultimately, public - health status which are posed by imports, especially illegal imports. We have drawn attention to this issue in our Report, "Veterinary, Plant Health and Public Health Controls on Imports", which is at Annex I of this document. In our view, the first line of defense of animal, plant and public health is an effective screen against imported diseases. The importance of effective veterinary surveillance and controls on imports was also stressed in Part One of the Northumberland Report.

Lesson to be learned:

1. The FMD outbreak demonstrates major inadequacies in the UK's existing sanitary (and phytosanitary) controls on commercial and personal imports. The current regime is in urgent need of review and strengthening. There is a clear need for more centralized coordination of responsibility and activity in this area. A full review of EU legislation and controls covering both animal and plant imports is needed.

...A key conclusion of this report is that the main threats to the UK are from illegal imports. While we conclude that the existing body of legislation and regulations is - on paper - adequate to control illegal imports, we have serious concerns about the rigor with which existing controls are enforced. The scope for action and possible responses to these, and other, concerns are suggested....

ANNEX 1 VETERINARY, PLANT HEALTH AND PUBLIC HEALTH CONTROLS ON IMPORTS

Amongst a list of recommendations the following were noted:

- A comprehensive review of both the framework and resourcing of the UK's system of import controls,

including the coordination of activity and allocation of responsibilities amongst central government, its agencies and local authorities in order to ensure coherent and effective controls;

- The establishment of a central database of imported products to ensure traceability and prevent re-entry of illegal imports;
- A concerted and sustained information campaign to establish and maintain public awareness of existing import controls. In particular, personal baggage provisions should be better publicized to travelers and critically reviewed as a channel for spread of disease;
- A review of controls on products traded by mail order and via the Internet

Excerpt from the Final report from the International Conference on Control and Prevention of Foot and Mouth Disease, Brussels 12-13 December 2001, Council of the European Union

Mrs Margaret Beckett: Eu import controls need to be tightened

Mr. Jacques Diouf, Director General of the UN FAO: a recent risk analysis, conducted by FAO, showed that 50% of the risks of introducing FMD to Europe was accounted for by illegal movements of livestock or animal products; foodstuffs carried by tourists or immigrants and legal trade in animal products.

Conclusion and Recommendations of the working groups....

Prevention of FMD virus introduction onto EU territory

- EC import policy to be reviewed, in particular in fields which may not be adequately or completely controlled at present, including an examination of the conditions for introduction of such products destined for ship chandlers and free warehouses ;
- Imports of small quantities of products should be prohibited, unless such products conform to EC standards and are declared at the point of introduction.
- Import checks and controls need to be improved.
- Risk communication in respect of virus introduction must be improved.

International Dimension

- There needs to be a global view on FMD, as this is not just a European issue, and for mutual benefit technical assistance could be provided to countries where FMD is endemic or appears sporadically.
- The EU and other developed countries could help third countries, where necessary, to establish improved information systems and effective veterinary services with sufficient legal power, mechanisms and resources to ensure adequate disease control and eradication measures.